



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF



50X1

13 APRIL 1966

~~TOP SECRET~~

DAILY BRIEF
13 APRIL 1966

1. South Vietnam

Ky's opponents seem determined to remove him and appear to be leaning toward the generals who overthrew Diem as acceptable temporary replacements. Several reports indicate that the Buddhists, and even the Catholics, would agree to having retired General Tran Van Don, of the former Minh junta, head an interim government. The opposition may also be thinking of bringing back "Big" Minh as chief of state in such a government.

Tri Quang told an American observer today that Don would be "ideal," because of his lack of religious affiliation, his popularity with the military but nominal civilian status, and his southern origin. The embassy notes that Don has lately been contacting a variety of political figures, probably to strengthen his political position in case of a "call"--or perhaps to mount a coup.

These opposition plans reckon without Ky, however. Although both he and Thieu say they are willing to accept as "inevitable" the demand for an elected constitutional convention, Ky has said he will resist any attempt to replace him with an interim government. We do not think Ky has the means to resist for long

50X1

50X1

50X1

2. South Korea

President Pak is concerned about the crisis in Saigon, particularly as it may affect his election prospects next year, but he is not, as suggested by the press, holding up the dispatch of additional Korean troops. A regiment of some 5,000 men is even now en route to South Vietnam, and, as far as we know, preparations for the July departure of another division are still going forward.

3. North Vietnam

The Soviets are beginning to send aviation gas and jet fuel to North Vietnam by sea instead of by rail through Communist China. [REDACTED]

50X1

50X1

4. Soviet Union

The Soviets have test fired eight intercontinental ballistic missiles since the winter standdown ended last month. All four first-line systems have been fired.

One of these, the SS-9, is due to be handed over to the Strategic Rocket Forces sometime this year. [REDACTED]

50X1
50X1

A second new missile, the SS-11, needs further testing. [REDACTED]

50X1
50X1

5. Poland

The Gomulka regime has decided to stage a series of "patriotic rallies" this weekend in near proximity to ceremonies marking the millennium of Christianity in Poland. In the resulting charged atmosphere, disturbances could occur.

50X1

6. Egypt

Nasir seems particularly jumpy these days. Exceptionally tight security precautions were taken last month to protect him on a relatively simple rail trip to Suez. [REDACTED] 50X1

[REDACTED]

We do not feel that Nasir is in any immediate danger of being overthrown, however.

7. Iran

[REDACTED] the Shah is again talking about applying for Soviet arms. He is attracted to this course by what he thinks of as Indian and Pakistani success in getting arms from "both sides." His advisers are convinced that the Shah will try to tap Moscow if the US cannot or will not meet his felt needs.

Such an action would be in line with the more assertive line the Shah has been taking recently. This has included accepting a Soviet offer to build him a steel mill. Like others before him, he believes he can deal with the Soviets without serious risk to his own position.

8. Afghanistan

King Zahir's brave experiment in democracy may be turning sour. The elected parliament is loudly at odds with Prime Minister Maiwandwal and Monday took the unprecedented step of declaring one of his recent decrees null and void. This promises to usher in a period of considerable turmoil. The chief beneficiary could turn out to be the authoritarian Daud, who is no friend of the democratic process.

ANNEX

[redacted] Assessment on Vietnam

50X1

12 April 1966

The situation in Vietnam has deteriorated rapidly and in so far as the regime has now offered a reversion to civilian government, the life of the military directorate as at present constituted is presumably limited. This offer may well increase rather than diminish the present political, social, and religious turmoil; and in any case the nature of any future government cannot be perceived at present.

Hué and Da Nang are still outside government control. Both the Buddhists' and Ky's military rivals have been encouraged by Ky's earlier vacillation. The extreme Buddhists have hardened their demands and have been joined by the more "moderate" (who claim they have been "betrayed by Ky") in boycotting the National Political Congress now taking place, and the two factions have apparently made an agreement promising violent country-wide demonstrations if their demands are not met. Ky is thus faced with growing pressure for the early removal of his government which General Thieu's offer to the National Political Congress of early elections seems unlikely to assuage.

Administratively the situation is equally unresolved. Ky was reported to have decided for the second time that the situation in the center must be restored, if necessary by force, though some of the government troops at Da Nang have been withdrawn. Generals Thi, Chuan (relieved of Thi's post at his own request) and Nhuan (I Division Commander) if not actively opposing Ky's forces are certainly not assisting them against the opposition.

It seems likely that Ky will not survive this test. His fate might be the result of a "palace revolution" which could throw up another general--possibly Thi--but in view of their present attitude

(Cont'd)

[redacted] 50X1

ANNEX (Cont'd)

it seems unlikely that the Buddhists would accept this and therefore the directorate may go as a whole. If this happens prosecution of the war against the Communists, which has already suffered as a result of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces' preoccupation with the political situation and, for example, delays in the unloading of bombs, may be endangered.

It is not easy to predict what form any new government may take. The Buddhists are united temporarily in opposition, but their statements reveal few positive ideas and not even whether they themselves wish to take over power, nor is the attitude of the Buddhist groups toward continuing the war clear, although both main groups have hinted at negotiations with the Viet Cong. No one figure is likely to emerge who can reconcile the conflicting emotions and interests of the various religious and political groups, the sects, and the armed forces (who still remain the decisive power). For the present we can only predict a worsening of the present confused situation.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET